

EFFECT OF DIGITALIS ON THE FŒTUS  
IN UTERO.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Having had occasion to doubt the propriety of employing digitalis to any considerable extent in the treatment of disease occurring during pregnancy, I am anxious to learn from those who have had more extensive experience in such cases than myself, whether or not this drug is injurious to the fœtus in utero. My own experience leads me to think that it may at times exercise a baneful influence on the fœtus. My impression on this subject was first derived during my attendance on a woman in the fifth month of pregnancy, about thirty years of age, who was labouring under typhus fever. She was twice bled at the beginning of the fever, each time to the amount of sixteen or twenty ounces, after which she took a febrifuge mixture, containing *Tinct. Digitalis*. The woman ultimately recovered, and was, at the end of the proper period of utero-gestation, delivered of a living child, whose natural bulk of body was considerably diminished, and whose skin was shrivelled and wrinkled all over, as if absorption of the substance within had been caused by the action of some stimulating medicine. Whether this appearance arose from the depletion which was necessary for the removal of the excessive arterial excitement present at the onset of the complaint, or from the stimulating effect of the digitalis, I cannot presume to say, but I am strongly borne out in my previous views of the influence of this drug on the uterine system, by the recent clinical observations of Professor Thomson, recorded in a No. of the present volume of THE LANCET.

It may be argued that digitalis, like the *secale cornutum*, may stimulate and excite the uterine functions without deleteriously affecting the fœtus. I have frequently given the *secale cornutum* in protracted labours, without the production of any apparent bad effects on the child, but there seems evidence of an opposite kind with regard to the internal use of digitalis.

I am of opinion myself, that if it do produce injury to the child, it is not the stimulating, but the sedative effect of the digitalis which does the mischief.

I am, Sir,  
Yours, very respectfully,  
E. WILKINSON.

Aspatia, Feb. 6, 1835.

## ACTIVE PRINCIPLE OF JALAP.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Through the medium of your valuable Journal, I wish to call the attention of the profession to a new remedy in the class of purgative medicines.

It has often been a matter of regret to me during my practice that we had no purgative at once *safe* and *mild* in its action, which could be conveyed in a minute quantity, when the stomach was in an irritable state, or the patient averse from medicine (which is particularly the case with children), who frequently will allow nothing of the kind to be given. However, Mr. Osborn, a scientific chemist, of Southampton, has succeeded in procuring the active principle of jalap in a very pure state, which he considers entitled to the name of "Jalapine." This preparation in the quantity of half a grain given by itself, or combined with hydrarg. submur. or hyd. c. creta, can be given to an infant in a little of its food with perfect safety and ease. From one grain to two, given in the form of pill or in a draught (if the latter, a little spirit must be added to hold it in solution), is a sufficient dose for an adult. Some cases may require three grains, but this will be but seldom needful. The preparation possesses the valuable quality of not producing constipation after its use. Trusting you will give this statement a place in your next Journal, I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,

W. HAMILTON KITTOE,  
Surgeon.

Southampton, Feb. 26, 1835.

APPARATUS FOR OBLIQUE FRACTURE OF  
THE CLAVICLE.—LITHOTRITIC INSTRUMENT.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I have forwarded by my son a machine, of which, about a year and a half since, I sent you a description, and which I have found extremely useful in oblique fractures of the clavicle, particularly where, as is sometimes the case from a horse falling upon a person, the shoulder, ribs, or soft parts, are much injured. Another instrument, to be worn under the clothes, I sometime since gave to Messrs. —, late Savigny's in St. James's-street.\* Respecting the lithotritic instrument

\* The apparatus forwarded by Mr. Jones may be seen by any professional gentleman on application at THE LANCET Office.—ED. L.